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Washington parish meets new missal with confusion, resignation

by Dan Morris-Young

NCR Today

Foreheads wrinkled in confusion, giggles, sighs, smiles and occasional eye-rolling were the order of the day as parishioners of Sacred Heart Parish in LaConner, Wash., fumbled with the ubiquitous "cue cards" and goldenrod music scores employed to coach them through the first Sunday Mass of Advent 2011 -- an initiation to the revised Roman Missal translation.

Acknowledged as a "destination parish" -- defined more by joy than geography -- Sacred Heart draws parishioners from at least a half-dozen towns in Washington's Skagit Valley. It has no resident pastor.

New parishioner Jeff Scott, who coaches basketball at nearby Mt. Vernon High School and works at Washington Bulb Company, said of the new Mass rite, "There's nothing wrong with change and it will take a while to learn, but I welcome change. It's no big deal."

LaConner resident Tracy Hancock, 37, was perplexed about the revised translation. "I was telling my mom who was sitting next to me, 'Is this just change for change's sake?' I guess I just don't understand the whole rationale behind the changes."

"It's just going to take a while to get used to it -- the new wording, and the new songs," the school counselor added. "Everyone is just going to have to be very patient. I do like some of the new songs -- a little more upbeat, I guess."

Ira Young, 64, said he "felt a twinge of delayed understanding and sympathy" for the Catholics who went through the liturgical upheaval following Vatican II more than 40 years ago.

"I can remember the real frustration and even anger some of them felt while I thought it was great," he said. "And these changes are peanuts compared to that."

"Honestly, I think the changes are a bit silly and capricious, but what the heck," Young said. The commercial fisherman and his wife drive about 25 minutes from Anacortes to worship at Sacred Heart.

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